
Looking Back on Animal Rescue Activities in the Wake of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake

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Today, I would like to talk briefly about the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake. When the earthquake struck, the first thing I thought about was organizing animal rescue. But in the wake of a major earthquake, it is difficult to take the first steps unless a rescue headquarters or some similar base of operations has been set up close to the disaster site.

At the time of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, the three groups shown on this slide (#2) gathered and I heard that there was also an idea to establish a Tokyo headquarters to support these groups and their work in the field.

Animal welfare organizations and veterinary medical associations were involved. But even in the case of the veterinary associations, the Kobe City one and the Hyogo Prefecture one are not totally the same. They are similar organizations, but there are small differences and some subtle gaps between them. The animal welfare organizations also differ in some respects from the veterinary medical associations, but at the same time all of these various organizations share some things in common. So, the focus was placed on in what way the organizations could work together to perform rescue activities based on the points they had in common.

In the end, the three groups, able to share certain things in common, did decide to work together. Then, joined by Kobe City and Hyogo Prefecture in an advisory capacity, they held discussions on what they could do and how to do it. Ultimately, the decision was made to establish a relief center and participate in animal rescue. This organization was set up on January 21, which was just four days after the earthquake struck. So all in all I think it was established rather quickly.

Next came the establishment of the rescue center facilities. In Kobe, there was an existing animal control

center in Kita Ward, so it was decided to set up the rescue center there. Actual construction work started from around January 22 or 23. On my slide, the location is written as 'Sanda City', because it took time to find a suitable location in Kobe. As a result, this other rescue center was constructed in Sanda, quite a way inland from Kobe. Now, in Hyogo Prefecture, we have the Aigokan that stands beside the Muko River and there are also plans to build similar facilities in Awaji, Miki, Kasai, and even in the Tajima area. The ultimate lesson is that it is very important to have land area and facilities readily available. Unless we are routinely considering where to construct such facilities, it will be difficult to perform rescue work immediately following a major disaster.

Kobe City's animal control center is located rather far away from the central urban area on a mountain that has become one big cemetery. In one corner of that mountain stands the animal control center along, a disaster prevention center, a prison (detention center) and a welfare complex called 'Shiawase no Mura'. The location is fairly distant from residential neighborhoods, and in that respect it was easy to establish the rescue center there.

The animal shelter in Sanda was constructed by developing a valley at the rear of Sanda Golf Course. This facility was also located at quite a distance from the center of Sanda. I think it would be difficult to create such a facility in a city center and that is why it is important to secure land for facilities at the very least. In our case, we only had to deal with the after-effects of an earthquake. But, for example, in the case of a large Tokai or Nansei earthquake in the future, the disaster area would likely be struck by a powerful tsunami. Overseas, in parts of Indonesia and elsewhere, coastal areas were deluged by a series of tsunamis over 10 meters high following the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake. In such

places, the rescue centers need to be established in locations at a safe distance away from potential tsunami floods. However, in Kobe we were able to respond without having to take the possibility of tsunamis into consideration.

In my slide (#3) we can see the rescue center's organization. We made various changes as we went along, although they were not systematized at first. This was the Administration Section, usually called "Reception". This section undertook such tasks as liaison with Headquarters, telephone reception, clerical work and reporting.

Regarding the reporting, Reception responded to the daily inquiries from the press, who would call up to ask, "How many animals are you taking care of?" Usually these calls came at 4 or 5 pm, when we were very busy taking care of the animals for the evening. At that time of day, many volunteers and animals were entering or leaving the center so it was very troublesome to have to deal with phone inquiries too. Looking back now, it would have been best if there had been one person specifically in charge of responding to inquiries from the press, but I remember things didn't go very smoothly at that time.

Then there was the Accounting Section. It is an important section that was charged with the tasks of handling and keeping track of money coming in and going out. Naturally, when we closed down, we finished off the accounting correctly by having a full examination performed by a certified public accountant. In this kind of operation, it is easy to deal with large items of expenditure, but the minor but daily outgoings (such as meals, stationery supplies and the like) can be very troublesome to keep a record of. For this too, we required frequent professional help in order to prevent everything from becoming disorganized. In the absence of good organization and professional help, it is impossible to carry out volunteer work comfortably.

Moving on, the slide shows the Veterinary Section, which was where medical treatment and health examinations of the animals took place. In Kobe's case,

the Veterinary Association of Kobe City performed the work. But in Sanda, where we were working alone, there were never enough staff on hand. At the beginning, we were taking care of 50 to 60 animals a day. We were only just able to get by despite treating the animals at all hours from morning to evening. Although many veterinarians and veterinary students hurried to our assistance, things did not go very well in practice. We realized that we needed to give them instructions on how different procedures should be done, and on when to refer cases judged too much for the center to handle to a veterinary hospital, etc. So we decided to appoint a chief to decide such matters. However, even among the members of the Veterinary Association of Kobe City, not everyone was qualified to play such a role. Some people were good at it while others were not. But in spite of everything, I think we managed the situation fairly well and we were able to hold our ground.

Next, we come to the Rearing Section, which was in charge of rearing young animals, a task actually performed by volunteers. We needed the volunteers to cooperate closely and we had to coordinate the schedule to ensure sufficient numbers of volunteers were available when needed. The volunteer side cannot carry out this kind of coordination alone.

At the beginning, we didn't know if we would be able to gather enough volunteers or not, so we just kept on asking people to join. Later, when we got used to the situation, we were able to state clearly how many volunteers would be needed, and at what time, and exactly what we wanted them to do. Depending on what a given volunteer could do, we sometimes had to tell them that 'we didn't need their particular skill just now, so could they call us back again a month or so later'. Thinking about it now, it would have been better if we had clarified what we needed at the outset and then asked specifically for cooperation with that.

Incidentally, because the volunteers for the Rearing Section had to always be on hand to take care of the animals, they had to live on site. So it was important to support their daily lives by providing meals, installing bathing areas, and providing daily-use items. It would

also have been far better if we had been more organized in this respect. For example, we had problems with dining. There was a volunteer group based near the center, and they applied for permission to help us out. But the local public health department advised them to request the rescue center to ensure that they not dine in the same place as animals were being treated, due to hygiene concerns. At the time our actual dining place was an examination table that was always cleaned after treatment. We all used to eat there and none of our volunteers had any particular complaints about it. But when this new group wanted to join our activities, it was no longer possible to continue doing things in that way. We did have a large tent that had been loaned to us by the SDF (army). The new volunteer group suggested that we use that tent for dining but it was already filled with relief goods. So we were unable to find a dining place, and as a result, we had to refuse the help of that volunteer group. My personal view is that it would have been better if they had been a little more flexible. For instance, in an emergency, ordinary regulations can't always be applied. Of course, the authorities handled things flexibly to a certain extent. For example, people who had lost their homes in the disaster were allowed to take their pet animals to live with them in temporary housing or in public housing.

In this way, we were at least able to run the rescue center without too many hitches, but I admit that there were some matters of regret and things in need of improvement that should be reflected upon.

The next slide (#4) shows some statistics about the volunteer numbers over time. It shows the day volunteers, the overnight volunteers, the veterinary students and the veterinarians. It also shows totals for the Veterinary Association of Kobe City and for the Japan Animal Welfare Society (JAWS). Roughly speaking, during the period from January to April, we ran the rescue center on an emergency basis. From around May 12, a proper prefabricated shelter was established. The number of volunteers declined naturally with the passage of time post-quake, but also because the need for their services gradually declined, as the graph

indicates.

Immediately after an earthquake, a great number of animals are brought to a rescue center. Most of them are distressed, sick or both. But as time goes by, the numbers needing rescue center care decline as animals are reunited with their owners or accepted by new owners, etc. Consequently the numbers of volunteers gradually decrease in line with the reduced demand for their services. It seems that this number is the minimum number to keep the rescue center operating. In general, potential volunteers would be well advised to think in advance about what they can and cannot do on a daily basis, such as where they are prepared to work, what their limits are, whether they can only help out during the summer vacation, etc.

When the organization, place and manpower have all been secured, the next thing required is money. In our case, we hadn't made any prior preparations to obtain funding so at the beginning we had a hard time. Of the money we raised from public donations, approx. \83 million was left over after the rescue center was closed down, so our Tokyo headquarters asked five other organizations to set up a headquarters for animal rescue in times of disaster. In fact, that money went on to pay the initial expenses for several animal rescue operations including the Nakhodka oil tanker disaster, the volcanic eruptions of Mount Usu in Hokkaido and on Miyakejima Island, etc. I believe that it helped make these activities run more smoothly. Of course, if a major earthquake were to hit a major metropolis such as Tokyo, \80 million or so would only be a drop in the ocean. But still, our purpose has been achieved to a certain extent.

We also carried out a questionnaire survey about animal rescue. The first question asked who should perform animal rescue activities (slide #6). The results showed that our respondents thought that the best method was for the three parties, namely government authorities, veterinary associations and animal welfare organizations, to work together, and the second best method would be to establish a permanent organization to perform animal rescue activities.

The next question (slide #7) asked how rescue centers should deal with rescued animals after performing first aid. Who should take care of the animals? Here, according to the respondents, the best method by far was that the original owners should take back their animals because the animals do not belong to the rescue center. Since the animals have owners, their care is the responsibility of their owners. Or if an owner judges that they can no longer take care of their animal, then it is still their responsibility to find a new owner.

Following the Great Hanshin Awaji Earthquake, we informed the owners of the animals in our care that the period we could take care of their animals would be limited to one month, and even though this was extended in special cases, the absolute maximum would be two months. We asked the owners to please decide what they were going to do about the animals within this period. At the beginning, we thought we might be able to take care of the animals for a little longer, such as until the time when the owners' new homes were constructed, etc. However, there were new problems that required consideration such as alpha syndrome, etc. Since volunteers were taking care of the animals in the rescue center, from the animals' point of view, their 'owners' were changing every week or two, and this made the animals act strangely. Animals exhibit subtle differences in behavior depending on how they are taken care of, so it is best to return them to their original owners as quickly as possible. I think owners should always have thought through how to deal with such a situation as part of their responsibility as owners. In the case of owners who have only one animal, they should be able to find a new owner without too much problem. But if an owner is taking care of a large group of animals, it can be very difficult to find new owners for all of them. I am not against individuals taking care of large numbers of animals, but in such cases the owners should decide in advance what they are going to do at a time of disaster or in some other eventuality. But it is not good if people simply accumulate many animals without thinking.

The second most common answer was that the rescue center should take care of the animals for as long as possible regardless of the situation. I think this is

absolutely right as well.

The next slide (#8) shows the spaying and neutering ratios of the animals when they were brought into the facility. The ratios of spayed or neutered animals were 3.8% for dogs and approx. 11% for cats. Probably such ratios are a little higher today than they were in 1995, but unless owners take responsibility for the animals in their care, unwanted animals will be born. We saw examples of this in the temporary housing. At the beginning, people were not allowed to keep animals in temporary housing facilities, but we asked the authorities to tell the temporary housing management not to place strict conditions on animal keeping. However, when people left the temporary housing accommodation, some animals remained behind and continued to breed. So owners should definitely spay or neuter their animals as a matter of personal responsibility.

This question (in slide 9) reads, "Have you made preparations for your pets in case of an emergency?" 28% of respondents answered, "Yes". That figure was unexpectedly high, so I checked the details, and discovered that what most of the respondents meant by "preparations" was nothing special. It meant simply giving their pet a name card or something similar. That is acceptable at one level, but it is not nearly enough. Today, we should microchip our pets, train them, spay or neuter them, vaccinate them against rabies, filariasis, etc., and keep them in a healthy condition. Also, preparations should not be limited to what we do to the animals but also to deciding how we can evacuate with them too. For example, an older person might find it difficult bring along a big Labrador when they evacuate. Pet owners need to consider these things in advance too.

In all, we rescued 1,556 animals. From among their owners, we recovered 481 questionnaire answers. I have been told that this roughly 30% response rate is a good figure for this kind of questionnaire. I am reporting these figures as the denominators of this questionnaire. That concludes my talk.

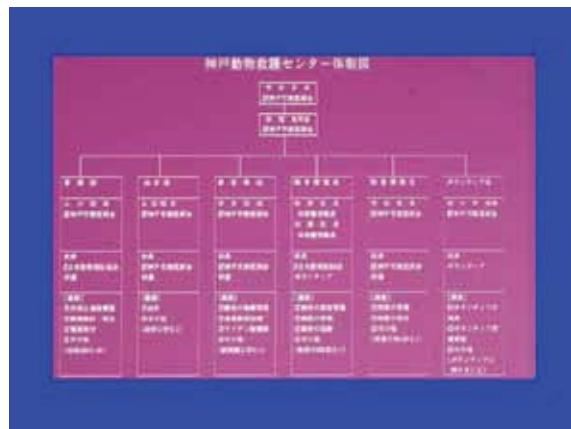
阪神・淡路大震災時の動物救護活動を振り返る

市田 成勝
(大震災動物救護メモリアル協議会会長)

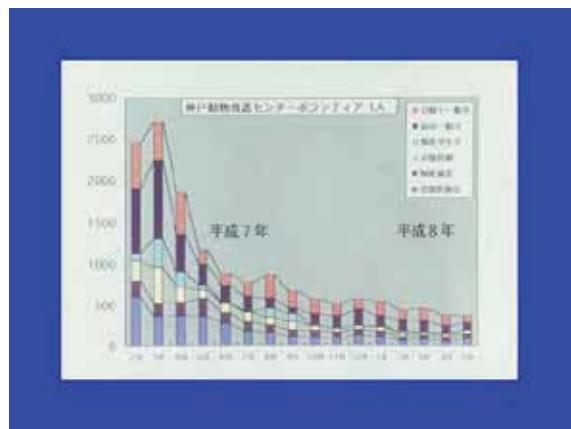
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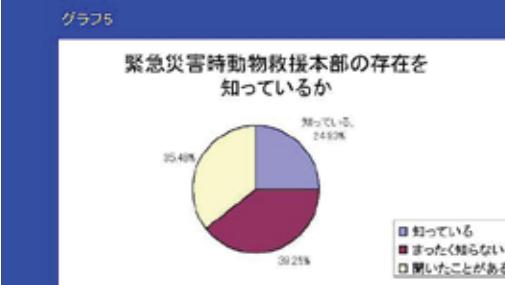
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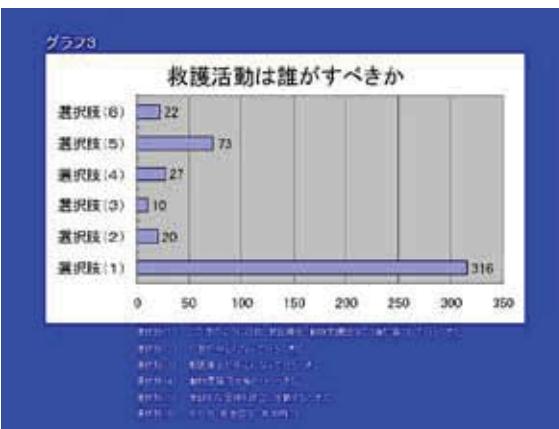
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【Slide 4】



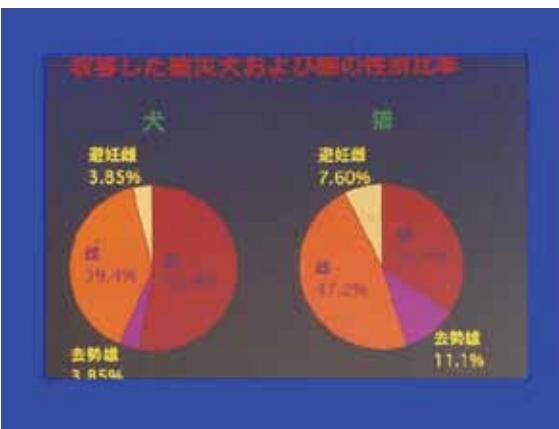
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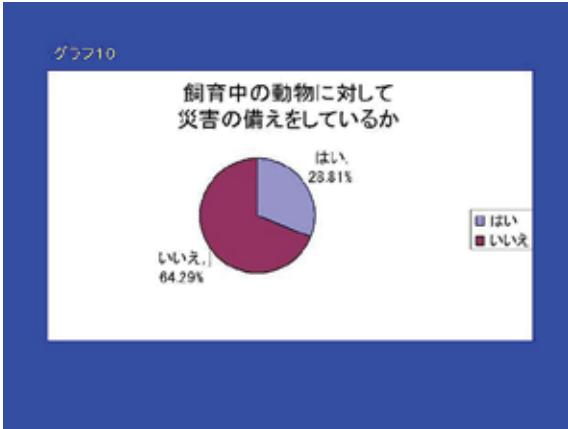
【Slide 6】



【Slide 7】



【Slide 8】



【Slide 9】



【Slide 10】